

Relevance of a campaign of awareness and clarification on allergy and intolerance and the prevalence of these different groups in a University of São Paulo

Academic authors: **Gabriel Stecca Canicoba, Anna Carolina Macieira Feitosa Mota**

Academic advisor: **Fabio Luiz Coracin**

Introduction: Allergy is an exacerbated immune response of body against something that is considered harmless, causing several consequences that can even lead to death through an anaphylactic shock, there being no specific treatment, being of extreme importance informing patients to avoid new contacts with those substances, such reaction involves an immunological mechanism and has variable clinical presentation, while intolerance is a metabolic disorder, lactose intolerance, for example is triggered by the absence of lactase on intestine, which determines an inability to digest lactose, causing discomfort, abdominal pain and diarrhea, there is no associated immune mechanism and there is no effective treatment other than using a synthetic enzyme. While in lactose intolerance it may be possible to ingest small amounts of milk, because intolerance is often dose-related, in milk protein allergy, for example, the feed should contain no milk or derivatives. Therefore, intolerance is different from allergy, although they are often confused even by professionals. Thus, the differentiation between these two is very important, since nutritional orientation is quite different and the care that must be taken with each one of these reactions is quite different.

Objective: Clarify the population about differences between allergy and intolerance, emphasizing the importance of knowing their own intolerances and allergies. Know the prevalence of different groups of allergy and intolerance in students of a private university in São Paulo and identify the knowledge of students about the allergenic tests and the number of people who are already did it.

Description and Analysis: The campaign was carried out inside a University in São Paulo by students of the third semester of the medical school, with the objective of informing other students about importance and differences between allergy and intolerance, covering main aspects like symptoms, signs, treatments and the reasons of knowing how to differentiate the reactions. The campaign was organized by the teachers with the academics, who obtained information from scientific articles and training classes, with university authorization. The students used illustrative banners, games and activities to help explaining and to emphasize the main content colloquially. In addition, questionnaires were distributed to better understand the target audience, which in this case were students from different courses with a 25 -year average age. The aim of campaign was to raise awareness and inform higher students about allergy and intolerance, as well as possible consequences and differences. Through the 125 questionnaires, 79% of the participants claimed to have some type of allergy, the majority of which were related to dust (60%), then food (29%) and urticarial (27%). However, of all those who participated, only 38% had already performed some type of allergen test, leading to conclusion that a large percentage of interviewed people had previously in contact with the substance and presented allergic reaction. In addition, due to great difference in prognosis between allergy and intolerance, the knowledge and differentiation between both are fundamental, in order to avoid possible consequences and to carry out appropriate treatment, thus making clear the importance of clarifying the population about these issues.

Keywords: Allergy; Intolerance; Students, medical; Knowledge.